



Shanghai Consulate News for Americans

Issue 29

June, 2010

Summer Hints for Easier Passport Services

This newsletter is published by the American Citizens Services (ACS) Unit, U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai. If there are any particular topics you are interested in, please contact ACS at: ShanghaiACS@state.gov.

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Special points of interest:

- * Travel.state.gov Web-site Re-launches With New "Look and Feel"
- * Does The Service You Need Require an Appointment?

- **Check your passport's expiration date.** Some countries in the region including China, the Philippines, and Indonesia require that a U.S. passport be valid for at least six months for visa issuance or visa-free entry. For further details about visa and entry and exit requirements of countries in the region please go to the travel.state.gov website or check with the airline or your travel agent.

- **Review your children's passports.** Check the expiration date of their passport – remember that passports for children under 16 are only valid for 5 years.

- **Make an appointment early for passport services.** All non-emergency consular services require an appointment. You can make an appointment online

through our website: http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/appointment_system011309.html. It typically takes 7- 10 working days from the time you apply to receive a full validity passport. There is a high level of demand for appointment slots in the days and weeks before a holiday and during the summer school holiday.

- **Avoid a long wait.** Avoid scheduling your appointment on Mondays or the days immediately before or after a holiday when wait times are longest.

- **Check the website.** You can find answers to common questions, as well as useful forms and instructions, on the Consulate General website at <http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/service.html>.

Upcoming Holidays and Other Closures

The American Citizen Services Unit will be **CLOSED** on the following days:

July 5, Mon: U.S. Independence Day

A full list of all of our holiday closings is available online at <http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/holidays.html>.

Please understand that our office is often very busy on the day before and the day after a holiday closure so you should expect longer wait times if you come on such days. If you visit us outside of these time periods, you should experience a shorter wait than pre-/post- holiday closure days.

Ensure Your Vote Counts – July State Primaries Around The Corner!

The following states will hold Primary Elections during the month of July, 2010 on the dates indicated:

July 20, 2010: Georgia
July 27, 2010: Oklahoma

Anyone who has not yet submitted a registration and ballot request (FPCA) for the 2010 calendar year should do so as soon as possible. The FPCA ballot application and instructions are available at

www.fvap.gov/FPCA. Click on your State on the map and follow the instructions to register and request an absentee ballot. Some States allow submitting the FPCA by fax or email in addition to regular mail.

Security Situation - Travel Warnings and Alerts

Security reminder: It is prudent for you and your family to review your personal security profile and to be aware of your surroundings at all times.

Since our previous Newsletter, the U.S. Department of State has issued new **Travel Warnings** for the following countries:

<u>Israel, the West Bank and Gaza</u>	06/20/2010
<u>Guinea</u>	06/16/2010
<u>Nepal</u>	06/15/2010
<u>Nigeria</u>	06/15/2010
<u>Afghanistan</u>	05/25/2010

Travel Warnings are issued to describe long-term, protracted conditions that make a country dangerous or unstable. A Travel Warning is also issued when the U.S. Government's ability to assist American citizens is constrained due to the closure of an embassy or consulate or because of a drawdown of its staff. This information is available at <http://travel.state.gov/travel/>

cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html.

The U.S. Department of State also has issued new **Travel Alerts**:

<u>Canada</u>	06/17/2010
<u>Pacific Typhoon Season</u>	06/16/2010
<u>Hurricane Season</u>	06/16/2010
<u>Jamaica</u>	06/14/2010
<u>South Africa</u>	05/25/2010

Travel Alerts are issued to disseminate information about short-term conditions generally within a particular country or region that pose imminent risks to the security of U.S. citizens. Natural disasters, terrorist attacks, coups, anniversaries of terrorist events, election-related demonstrations or violence, and high-profile events such as international conferences or regional sports events are examples of conditions that might generate a Travel Alert. This information is available at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1766.html.

The most up-to-date information regarding permitted and **prohibited items** on flights can be viewed online at

<http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

For additional information, please visit

"**Americans Traveling Abroad**" on the U.S. Department of State website: http://travel.state.gov/visa/americans/americans_1252.html. Students traveling abroad may wish to visit the State Department site designed for them: <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>.

To obtain up-to-date information on security conditions, please call 1-888-407-4747 (toll free in the United States), or +1-202-501-4444 if you are outside the United States.

You may also visit the Consular Affairs twitter page at <http://twitter.com/TravelGov>.

Changes in Chinese Residence Permits for Foreign Relatives

From the Shanghai Daily 28MAY2010:

FOREIGN family members of a Chinese citizen will be able to apply for a two-year stay permit, one year longer than the current visa allows, local authorities said yesterday.

And those who came to China on visas of six months or less can now apply for sev-

eral extensions.

The new rule aims to better serve foreign family members of a Chinese citizen who pay a visit here or raise their families in China, as well as children of overseas Chinese who are living in China. Instead of holding a visa valid for one year at most, they will be entitled to get the two-year stay permit.

Foreign spouses, parents and children under 18 of Chinese citizens or foreigners who have permanent residency permits qualify for the stay permit.

People can apply at the bureau's four outlets - three in the Pudong New Area and one in Puxi. Log onto www.police.sh.cn, or dial 2895-1900 to consult for more information.

Travel Alert: Pacific Typhoon Season 2010

This Travel Alert is being issued to warn U.S. citizens residing in or traveling to East Asia and the West and Central Pacific region about the ongoing threat of typhoons originating in the West and Central Pacific region. The region covered by this alert includes countries in East Asia and the West and Central Pacific regions north of the Equator. Typhoons in this area of the Pacific may occur year round; however, historically, the most active months are June through November. U.S. citizens in the region should monitor local weather reports and take appropriate action as needed. This travel alert expires on December 1, 2010.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Central Pacific Hurricane Center (CPHC) predicts a 70 percent chance that activity during the 2010 Typhoon Season will be below normal in the Central Pacific basin. Each season, the West and Central Pacific region experiences 31 typhoons on average, about half of which have the potential to cause severe destruction. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration recommends that those in typhoon-prone regions be prepared.

In the past, many U.S. citizens traveling abroad in this area during typhoon season were forced to delay their travel or return to the United States because of

infrastructure damage to airports and limited flight availability. In many cases, flights were suspended, and passengers faced long delays due to the need to repair a damaged airport. Roads were also washed out or obstructed by debris, adversely affecting access to airports and land routes out of affected areas. In the event of a typhoon, you should be aware that you may not be able to depart an affected area for 24 to 48 hours or more.



In the aftermath of a storm, you may encounter uncomfortable and sometimes dangerous conditions after storms have passed while you wait for transportation back to the United States. In many places, typhoons are often accompanied by damaging high tides and flooding. If you are living close to the ocean or other bodies of water, you may be especially at risk. Landslides and mudslides are also a serious concern dur-

ing heavy periods of rain. Looting and sporadic violence sometimes occur after natural disasters but media reports may be exaggerated or otherwise inaccurate. Be sure to check with local authorities for safety and security updates. Because of weather conditions or damage to infrastructure, U.S. Embassy and host country security personnel may not be able to assist you at all times.

If the damage in the aftermath of a storm requires evacuation, the State Department and our embassies and consulates overseas work to identify and recommend the safest and most efficient means of travel away from a disaster. Commercial airlines are the best source of transportation in an evacuation. The Department arranges other means of transport, including U.S. military support, only as a last resort when commercial transportation is completely unavailable. In any emergency, you should know that the Department does not provide free transportation but has the authority to provide you a loan to return to the United States if you are in financial need. If you have not done so already, you should obtain travel insurance to cover unexpected expenses during an emergency.

If you are living in or traveling to storm-prone regions overseas, you should prepare for typhoons and tropical storms by

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Travel Alert: Pacific Typhoon Season 2010

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organizing a kit containing a supply of bottled water, non-perishable food items, a battery-powered or hand-crank radio and vital documents, including your passport, photo identification, and/or birth certificate, in a waterproof container. Emergency shelters often have access only to basic resources and limited medical and food supplies.

Be sure to monitor local media to stay aware of weather developments. For further information on typhoon warnings in the West and Central Pacific region, please consult the Joint Typhoon Warning Center in Honolulu at <http://www.usno.navy.mil/JTWC> and the National Weather Service's Central Pacific Hurricane Center, <http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/cphc>, as well as Fiji's regional meteorological center responsible for cyclone warnings in the South Pacific region at

<http://www.met.gov.fj>.

Minor tropical storms can develop into typhoons very quickly, limiting the time available for you to evacuate safely. Please tell family and friends in the United States of your whereabouts and keep in close contact with your tour operator, hotel staff, and local officials for evacuation instructions in the event of a weather emergency. Please protect your travel and identity documents against loss or damage, as the need to replace lost documentation could hamper or delay your return to the United States.

We encourage all U.S. citizens abroad to register with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate through the Department of **State's travel registration website**. By registering, you can receive the nearest **embassy's or consulate's most recent security and safety updates** during your trip. Registration also ensures that we can

reach you during an emergency either abroad or at home. While consular officers will do their utmost to assist you in a crisis, please be aware that local authorities bear primary responsibility for the welfare of people living or traveling in their jurisdictions.

Additional information on cyclones and storm preparedness may be found on the Typhoon Season page of the Bureau of **Consular Affairs' Hurricane Preparedness** website. Updated information on travel in typhoon-prone regions may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States and Canada, or from other areas, 1-202-501-4444. If you travel in the region, please check the U.S. Embassy or Consulate website with consular responsibilities for the territory you will be visiting. For further information please consult the Country Specific Information website for the country or territory in question.

Milu Guide Available



A team of Shanghai entrepreneurs has assembled a useful guide to Shanghai for expats. It covers five sections about Shanghai on a daily basis: Getting things in order, Living in Shanghai, Well being and health, Work-

ing and Setting up a business, and Expo 2010.

It's free (paid for by advertising by local businesses). You can download it at miluguide.com or pick up a copy around town.

Leaving Shanghai Consular District?

If you are departing the Shanghai consular district after a long stay here and you formally registered your stay with the U.S. Consulate, please do not forget to cancel your registration when you leave.

You can unregister yourself by visiting the <https://travelregistration.state.gov>

site if you previously registered through this site.

If you previously submitted a paper registration form to the U.S. consulate, you may unregister yourself by sending an email request to:

ShanghaiACS@state.gov.



Tax Information Available on the Internet

The most comprehensive resource for taxes on the web is the Internal Revenue Service website: www.irs.gov. There is a page on that site that is specifically designed for U.S. Citizens and Resident Aliens Abroad: <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/international/article/0,,id=97324,00.html>.

Federal Tax forms can be obtained online at <http://www.irs.gov/formspubs/index.html>.

Please note that the IRS has just released the latest comprehensive guide for your 2009 taxes called Publication 17. You can read all about it and download it here: <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=216665,00.html>.

Also useful is Publication 4732, which contains specific tax information for Americans living abroad and can be downloaded at: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p4732.pdf>.

For more information on U.S. taxes, please consult the list of websites and telephone numbers below to help find the forms and answers you need.

Tax guidance for people in the military: <http://www.irs.gov/individuals/military/index.html>

Electronic payment website: <http://www.eftps.gov/>

Refund information: <http://www.irs.gov/individuals/article/0,,id=96596,00.html?portlet=4>

Phone Services

Individuals: 1-800-829-1040*

Businesses: 1-800-829-4933*

For routine tax return and preparation questions, you may call the International Taxpayer Help Line in Philadelphia at 1-215-516-2000.

- Refund Inquiries: 1-800-829-4477 *
- TeleTax: 1-800-829-4477
- ITINs after 6 weeks: 1-800-829-1040 *
- Exempt Organization Help Desk: 1-877-829-5500 *
- Tax Offset Program (TOP) Help Desk: 1-800-304-3107
- E-Services Help Desk: 1-512-416-7750

(* Please note: Toll-free numbers (aka "1-800 numbers" are generally for use only within the U.S., but can be called using Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) services such as Vonage, Lingo or Skype. If you do not have access to one of these services, a direct dial phone number is listed on the IRS website.)

State Tax Returns: For individual state income tax information, visit <http://www.taxadmin.org/>. State tax forms are available on <http://www.taxadmin.org/fta/link/forms.html>. The Consulate does not provide any state tax forms or state tax information.

Overseas Taxpayers Get Automatic 2-Month Filing Extension

U.S. income tax returns were due on April 15th. If you reside overseas, however, you are given an automatic two month extension to file. However, any tax money you owe must be paid by April 15th to avoid paying interest and possibly penalties. Note: Payments are not considered received until the date of actual receipt by the IRS, not the postmark date.

Redesign of Travel.State.Gov



On May 25, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs unveiled a new design for www.travel.state.gov that is easier to navigate and more user-friendly.

Travel.state.gov is the State Department's preeminent tool for reaching out to the American public about travel safety in other countries, and for you to report your travel plans so that Embassies and Consulates around the world can serve you better. Check out the website's new look today! <http://www.travel.state.gov/>

Shanghai Consulate News for Americans

U.S. Consulate General, Shanghai, China

1038 West Nanjing Road,
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Fax: (86-21) 6217-2071

After Hours Emergencies:
(86-21) 6433-3936

Open 8:00am - 11:30am
and 1:30pm - 3:30pm
Monday to Friday.

*Closed on Tuesday
afternoons, weekends
and holidays.

[http://shanghai.
usembassy-china.org.cn/](http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/)

IRS Corner:

Question: I am planning for the summer and would like to take my domestic helper to the U.S. for a family trip so that she can help me look after my children. Assuming our helper qualifies and obtains a U.S. visa, I understand we need to have a U.S. employment contract and that we need to pay at least the prevailing wage equivalent for the location in the U.S. in which we will stay. Please advise if we need to pay U.S. employment tax for the income our helper will earn while in the U.S.

Answer: Assuming your helper qualifies and obtains a U.S. visa, if he/she is not a U.S. citizen or permanent resident ("Green Card" holder) and does not have a U.S. social security number, you do not have to pay U.S. employment tax for your helper, so long as your trip is just a visit and you are not moving back to reside in the United States. For information on the prevailing wage by locality and how to draft a U.S. employment contract, please refer to the Non-Immigrant Visas section of the Consulate website: http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/domestic_employee_visas.html.

Does The Service You Need Require An Appointment?

The Shanghai American Citizen Services Unit uses a mandatory on-line appointment system for all non-emergency services. We hope this tool will assist you in budgeting your time and reduce the wait time during high demand periods.

Appointments are necessary to:

- Obtain a U.S. passport for minors and adults
- Add visa pages to a U.S. passport
- Apply for a Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA) and first U.S. passport for children
- Submit additional documents for a pending CRBA application
- Obtain notarial services
- Complete a Marriage-ability Affidavit

Visitors may receive several services during the same visit to American Citizen Services (ACS) unit. Please make a separate appointment for each individual service.

Please arrive at least 10 minutes before your appointment time, to allow time to clear security.

Scheduled appointments will be automatically canceled for applicants who arrive over 15 minutes after their scheduled time.

No appointments are necessary to:

- Apply for Reports of Death
- Report a passport lost / stolen when you are in urgent need to travel outside of China. Bring proof of pending travel
- Register with the Consulate
- Pick up passport and/or Consular Report of

Birth Abroad (CRBA) upon notification

- Pick up Social Security checks or ask questions about SSA benefits
- Submit additional documents for a pending passport application
- Register to vote
- Apply for a Travel Letter (applies to Legal Permanent Residents only)
- Pick up re-entry permits (applies to Legal Permanent Residents only)
- Abandon permanent resident status
- Attend Tuesday American Citizens' Visa Hour at 3-4pm
- Attend Wednesday Education Hour at 3:30-4:30pm